

The Muse.

From Graham's American Magazine.

MAPLE SUGAR.

BY ALFRED B. STREET.

Oh, the rich, dark maple sugar! how it tells me of the woods,
Of bluebird winds and melting snows, and budding
solitudes!
Oh, the melting maple sugar! as I taste its luscious
sweets,
Remembrance in my raptur'd ear her witching song
repeats:
Once more my heart is young and pure! once more my
footsteps stray
Amid the meads, the lovely scenes, of childhood's opening
days.

A frosty night the searching air made heart-felt a
delight,
Stern Winter seemed as if again to rally in his might;
But, oh, how pure and beautiful the morning has arisen!
What glorious floods of sunlight! off the dwelling is a
prison!

Off, off, I run, leap, and drink the air! off! leave man's
trails behind!
Nature has more of pleasure now than haunts of human
kind.

How free the blood is bounding! how soft the sunny
glow!
And, hark! the fairy tones are ringing underneath the
snow,
Shiny, shapely! the gossamer gleams glide from hemlock,
fir, and rock,
And low, low, marshy meadow seems as spotted with a
flock;

Drip, drip, the icicle sends its tears from its sparkling
tip, and still
With tinkle, tinkle, beneath the snow rings many a
viewless rill.

We cross the upland pasture, robed with a brown and
golden pall,
The maple ridge heaves up before us—a sloping Titan wall!
The maple ridge! how gloriously, in summer it pitches
down!

Behold, what a mossy floor is spread! above, what a
flock is best!
What lofty pillars of fluted bark! what magical change-
ful lights
As the leaves turn over and back again to the breeze's
flying priests.

Up, up, the beaten path I climb, with bosom of blithe-
ness cheer;
For the song, oh, varied with whistle shrill of the wood-
man's Keen, I hear;
The bold and hardy woodman, whose rifle is certain
death,
Whose axe, when it rings in the wilderness, makes its
glory depart the breath,
Whose cabin is built in the neighboring dell, whose
dwell is the skin of the doe,
And who tells long tales of his hunting deeds by the
hearth-fire's cheerful glow.

The summit I gain—what soaring trunks—what spreading
bald-head tops!
And so, from the backs of the oak, sap, slow welling
and limpid, drops;
A trickle I turn—the gleam of a fire strikes sudden
upon my view,
And in the midst of the ruddy blaze two kettles of sooty
hue.

Whilst bending above, with his sinewy frame, and wield-
ing with ready skill
His ladle amidst the amber depths, proud king of the
scene is Will.

The boiling, bubbling liquid! it thickens each moment
there,
He stirs it to a whirlpool now, now draws this thread
in air;

From kettle to kettle he ladles it to granulate rich and
slow,
Then fashions the mass in a hundred shapes, congealing
them in the snow.

While the bluebird strikes a sudden joy through the
branches green and dark,
As he seems to ask in his merry strain if the violet yet
has come.

The rich, dark maple sugar! thus it brings to me the
joy,
The dear warm joy of my heart, when I was a careless,
happy boy.

When pleasures so accorded in after life, like flowers,
thus strewn my way,
And no dark and experience-breathed "doomed sufferer
be not gay!"

When life like a summer ocean spread before me with
golden glow,
And soft with the sense of Hope, but concealing the
wrecks that lay below.

The Story-Teller.

From Godley's Lady's Book.

THE BUTTER MARKET.

BY T. S. ANTHUR.

Between cause and effect, philosophers maintain that there exists a just relation—and this no one can doubt—yet, for all, we cannot help sometimes wondering at the extent of the effect when compared with the smallness of the cause—

"Large streams from little fountains flow!"

And this appears insignificant in the origin of things in the world of nature, has its counterpart in the world of mind. How lighter than a feather in comparison, sometimes, is the cause which produces unwholesome! How often is the comfort of a whole family abridged by some trifling circumstance that ought not to have made a visible impression! How often is the sky darkened by a cloud which at first was no larger than a man's hand!

Causes that, to one unaffected by them, seem the most ridiculous, are permitted, week after week and month after month, to come within the family sphere and keep it ever in a state of disturbance. Of these, perhaps the most fertile of domestic inquietude, are the fluctuations in the price of that necessary article of table comfort—butter.

Don't smile, grave reader, at this seeming fall in the dignity of our exordium. Even while you smile, you may have meditations some funny that would never have marred your countenance had butter not risen, at some period in your history, to the extraordinary price of thirty-five cents a pound! Yes, what assertion is true, and we are prepared to prove what we affirm. We believe that, especially in our large cities, one of the most active causes of domestic infelicity lies in the fluctuation of the butter market. How many an honest citizen, of worthy maternal head of a family, has gone to market in the most amiable mood possible, and after an absence of an hour, come home sadly changed in temper, to throw a shadow over the pleasant household! And why? What cause has been potent enough to effect so and a change? Butter has risen five cents in the pound! Yes, there lies the explanation! It is no more nor less. Butter has done it!

Flour may go up to ten dollars, sugar to twenty cents, and even potatoes grow scarce at a dollar a bushel, without in the least abridging either the moral or physical comforts of Mr. and Mrs. Livewell, or affecting unpleasantly any member of their family; and those good things of life, "creature comforts," as they call them, may fall to the minimum market rate, and not produce a visible change in the thermometer of their feelings; but let there be a rise in butter, and down goes the mercury. The freezing point is thirty-seven and a half cents a pound, and "Zero" fifty. You may come within a few cents of the price at almost any time, by just looking into the face of Mr. or Mrs. Livewell, any one of the junior Livewells, from Tom, who has just been passed into the High School, to little Em, who has been elevated to the high chair, and who likes butter with her jam.

We verily believe, that if butter never rose to go above a shilling a pound, the Livewells would be the happiest people in

the city, and were it to keep at thirty-five, they would be the most miserable.

"Oh, dear! what are we coming to!" said Mrs. Livewell, in the midst of a few friends invited to spend a social evening not long since. "Butter is so terribly high! What do you think I paid for it?"

"Thirty-one!" inquired a lady present.

"Thirty-three!"

"Yes, indeed! Why, did you get it for thirty-one?"

"Mrs. D— told me she paid thirty-one for excellent butter this morning," said the lady.

"Thirty-one! Then I was cheated; that's all! Did you get it for that?"

"I only paid twenty-five."

"Twenty-five!" Mrs. Livewell actually arose to her feet. "Twenty-five did you say?" There was a look of profound astonishment on her face.

"Was it good butter?"

"I never tasted better. But I have engaged," returned the lady.

"Engaged! Oh! For the whole season?"

"Yes. A man comes to the door every week and serves me at a uniform price, no matter whether the market be high or low."

Mrs. Livewell sat down again, and the expression of her face changed.

"I don't like that plan," said she. "I tried it once, but I don't like it. It does well enough when butter's high, but to be paying a quarter for all your butter when the market is glutted with the very first quality for twenty and twenty-two, and even as low as sixteen, is not so pleasant, as I have experienced."

"But," said the lady, "take the season through, and I believe it comes cheaper. Besides, it's a great convenience to have a good article served you regularly. This running through the market twice a week, tasting butter at every tub, is a terrible annoyance."

"I'm sure," returned Mrs. Livewell, "it wasn't a cent cheaper to us. Indeed, I know it cost us a great deal more than when we took the rise and fall of the market. How much do you use a week?"

"Five pounds," replied the lady.

"It takes eight for our table every blessed week, besides three or four pounds for cooking. It's a terrible tax! When the price is down as low as twenty cents, I don't mind it; but to be paying thirty for butter is dreadful! I really feel unhappy about it."

"A pound of butter," spoke up Mr. Livewell, at this part of the conversation, "is never worth over a quarter, and to charge more, is downright cheating. If I had anything to do with law-making, I'd fix that as the highest limit."

"And a barrel of flour at six dollars," said the lady, who had joined in the conversation.

"Well, yes—or seven dollars, if you choose. But butter should never be suffered to go above twenty-five cents. That is the very maximum price."

"By the way," said Mr. Livewell, at this part of the conversation, drawing, as he spoke, a slip of paper from his pocket, "I met with something to-day that is quite apropos to the subject. The fact is, the public mind is getting awake to this great injustice, and there will be a salutary reform before long. The time for reform is at no great distance."

Mr. Livewell then read an account of some experiments made in the production of butter from grass and hay by a direct chemical process.

"There's a better time coming, you see," he remarked, as he carefully refolded the slip of paper, a light playing over his face; "or, as the song has it—

"A good time coming, boys,
Wait a little longer,
Wait a little longer."

At no very distant period we shall dispense with the agency of the cow in this important matter altogether. And think what a saving that will be! Men of intelligence and enterprise will then come into the business, and we shall have a true competition—not such as exists among plodding farmers and dairy-men, who keep on in the beaten track from generation to generation, as if there were no such thing as improvement. By this new method, you see that a large per centage more of butter is obtained from a ton of hay than when fed to cows. And this is no more than might be reasonably inferred, for it is plain that the animals must abstract a portion for their own subsistence."

"How soon," inquired Mrs. Livewell, seriously, "will this new method be adopted?"

"Immediately, without doubt. The thing has been tried and proved. I shouldn't wonder if in six months we had a large establishment capable of supplying the whole city with milk, butter and cream, at half the usual prices."

"Delightful!" exclaimed Mrs. Livewell. "Oh, I wish it were to-morrow! How much we are indebted to science!"

The conversation was interrupted here by the entrance of refreshments in the inviting shape of a couple of pyramids of ice-cream and a basket of choice cakes. Instantly the price of butter was forgotten—at least by all except the Livewells—and conversation, by a natural impulse, took a new and more generally agreeable direction.

Now, the Livewells are not pious people by any means. Five or six dollars were spent for refreshments without a feeling of regret for the cost. In fact, money ever passed freely for all their wants or pleasures, except in the single instance we have adduced. Only when butter was named, did the usually open hand become affected by a sudden contraction. Canvases-backs at a dollar and a half a pair were often on their table; venison steaks smoked on their chafin-dish; and, indeed, the first and often dearest articles of the season were indulged without a thought of the cost coming in to their enjoyments—unless, indeed, butter happened to be as high as thirty-three at the time. Alas for a good digestion when this was the case!

Bright and early on the morning after Mrs. Livewell had been addressed by the news of a great anticipated reform, by which cows and farmers could be dispensed with, that lady started for the market-house, in order to obtain her usual supply of butter. It did not escape her notice, as she came in the vicinity of Market street, that nearly all the bearers of butter-kettles who were wending their ways homeward, had sober faces. This was ominous of another rise, and caused a depression of at least two degrees in the thermometer of the lady's feelings.

"What's better!" she asked, after entering the market-house and passing down a short distance to the stand of a Chester county farmer, who always sold an article of undoubted excellence.

"Thirty-seven and a half," replied the farmer.

"What!" Mrs. Livewell drew herself up and looked seriously at the man. "I only paid you thirty-three on Saturday, and that was a shocking price."

"Butter's up, ma'am," replied the farmer, with a comical leer, as he could afford to be in a good humor, for he had nearly a hundred pounds in his tub, and knew, to a moral certainty, that it would go off whether Mrs. Livewell bought or not.

"Won't you take thirty-five for four pounds?"

"No, ma'am, not for twenty. Butter is better these times."

Mrs. Livewell was just on the point of starting the ears of the farmer by an announcement of the important discovery that had been made, and which was to bring about a new order of things in the butter line, when she found herself sur-

rounded by a jostling, eager crowd of butter-seekers, all nearly as much disturbed by the rise in the market as herself.

"I'll try farther," the murmured, engaging herself from the little knot of people that were pressing upon her, and moving down the market. She knew all the good butter-tubs from Eighth street to Fourth, but, alas! there was no variation in price. There seemed to have been a combination among the dealers to extort money from the good citizens of Philadelphia, and in her heart she felt that the offence was as justly indictable as swindling. Three pounds, instead of four, the usual half-weekly supply, were purchased, after nearly three-quarters of an hour had been consumed in the search for good butter at thirty-five.

"Bless me, Kate, what has kept you so long!" was the grave salutation of Mr. Livewell, as his wife entered, half an hour after the usual breakfast time. "I was just going. It's too late for me to be away from business."

Mrs. Livewell's feelings were not in a condition to bear a much heavier pressure than they were already sustaining; and it is hardly, therefore, a matter of wonder that she made a painful reply, communicating, as she did so, the painful fact that butter had risen to thirty-seven and a half.

"Thirty-seven!" exclaimed Mr. Livewell, retreating a pace or two.

"Yes, thirty-seven. I didn't buy but three pounds, and that is as much as I intend to get of you Saturday, so you may all make the most of it you can."

Mrs. Livewell threw aside her bonnet and shawl carelessly. The shawl was cast upon a table, where the nurse had spilled some milk while feeding the baby, and injured to an amount equal to four or five pounds of butter. Mrs. Livewell saw in a moment the damage that had been done. Lifting the shawl, she looked at it all indifferently, and then said, as she threw it again over her—

"Ruined! No use can be helped now, and so there's no use in being unhappy about it."

As Mrs. Livewell descended to the breakfast-room, the serious fact of the rise in butter again took the uppermost place in her thoughts, and left her in no humor to bear the restlessness of the children, who were hungry and impatient from having had to wait nearly half an hour beyond the usual breakfast hour.

The table was already furnished with two plates of the fresh butter, each containing half a pound. One of them was peremptorily ordered off, and the other piece cut in two.

When the hot cakes arrived, they were pronounced "swimming in butter." Not one of the children, however, from Tom down to Em, were willing to believe this.

"See me," said Tom, "there isn't hardly any butter on my cakes."

"Take molasses, then. Butter is too dear to be used after your fashion."

"I don't like molasses," replied Tom, in a most interesting voice.

"Then don't eat it," said the mother, her voice expressing anything but an amiable temper.

"Can't I have more butter?"

"No, not a particle more," was answered most positively.

Tom, at this, threw down his knife and looked up, whereupon his father ordered him to leave the table.

"I want some more butter," said little Em, unappalled by the fate of Tom.

"There's butter enough on your cakes," replied the mother.

"No there ain't. I want some more butter."

"Well, you can't have any more. Here's molasses."

"I don't want molasses. Give me more butter."

"No, not a particle more."

Em showed her disappointment by screaming to the extent of her vocal capacity.

"You may scream from now until Doomsday," said Mrs. Livewell, coolly, "but you'll get no more butter. I declare, I never saw the like; you all seem to think butter is scarce."

"I don't like these cakes," broke in Katy, next older than Em, who was still screaming madly. And the little lady pushed away her plate and leaned back in her chair.

"Why don't you like them? Will you hush, hush?"

The first sentence was a calm interrogation; the last, an angry exclamation.

"I want more butter," said Katy.

"Well, you won't get any more. Your cakes are swimming now."

Katy began to whine, and Em continued her undiminished scream.

"If you don't hush, I'll—" exclaimed Mr. Livewell, suddenly losing all patience and laying his hand heavily upon Em.

The threat of untutored consequence did not in the least appal the little rebel, if the continuance of her ear-piercing screams gave any clue to the state of her feelings.

"I can't stand this," fell, at length, from the over-tired father's lips, and rising up quickly, he seized Em with a determined grip, and in a wonderfully short space of time, landed her in the chamber above, where he left her to cry it out by herself.

As he came down, his eyes rested for a moment or two upon his hat, which hung in the passage, and he felt strongly inclined to seize upon it and beat a hurried retreat; but he resisted the temptation, and again entered the breakfast-room.

Mrs. Livewell looked distressed, and the two remaining children were a rebellious aspect. The latter, however, fully warned by the fate of Tom and Em, were silent, and ate, with an evident want of relish, the cakes said to be "swimming in butter." Upon this point, it is but fair to remark, there were two opinions.

Alas! what a tempest of unhappy feelings had the advance of a few cents a pound in butter awakened in the breast of nearly every member of this family. The bouquet of flowers which Mrs. Livewell bought that morning in market, cost more than the whole advance on four pounds, the usual quantity purchased. This bouquet had been thrown on the mantelpiece carelessly, and while she was making her children miserable by stinting them in their allowance of butter, the baby was tearing the flowers to pieces and strewn the leaves upon the floor. The destruction caused only a passing murmur. Strange habits of mind!

Yet Mrs. Livewell does not stand alone. She is the representative of a class, and that a very large one, with whom the price of butter throws brightness or gloom over the domestic circle.

Not loud, but deep were the anathemas uttered by Mr. Livewell against the shameful extortions of the farmers and the dairy-men, as he hurried towards his store. Hopefully and earnestly did he look forward to the time when a milk and butter laboratory would be established in Philadelphia, and the city be guaranteed a full supply of the latter article at a fair rate. On arriving at his store, he sat down to read his newspaper, and the first thing that met his eye was a glowing description of a new atmospheric churn, by which butter could be produced from either milk or cream in an incredible short space of time.

As the story went, every man could churn his own butter at the breakfast-table while the toast was making or the tea drawing. Without waiting to read his letters, just brought in by one of

his clerks, off started Mr. Livewell to see this wonderful churn. The man who had the article for sale, gave the most extraordinary account of its performance, and succeeded with but little trouble in inducing his rather green customer to exchange a ten-dollar bill for one of them.

"What in the name of wonder is this machine you sent home to-day?" inquired Mrs. Livewell of her husband on the appearance of the latter at dinner time.

"That's a newly-invented churn on the atmospheric principle," replied Mr. Livewell, his face all animation.

"A churn?"

"Yes, my dear; on a new principle altogether. It has just been discovered. Every housekeeper can now have his own butter at less trouble than it takes to go to market. Put in a gallon or two of cream, and you have pounds of fresh butter in five minutes!"

"Are you certain, Mr. Livewell?" inquired his wife, half incredulously.

"Oh, yes; it's no matter of speculation, but a fixed fact. Butter can be made from cream in five minutes, and from skim milk in ten. Nothing to do but turn so, and the air rushes through these dashers, or whatever you call them, and the butter is there. It's the step between the chemical process we talked of last night and the ordinary mode. Isn't it grand?"

"But it can't help doing. The principle is as plain as daylight. It must do. To-morrow morning we will get a gallon of cream from our milk-man, and have butter of our own churning for breakfast. Think what a saving it will be!"

"How much butter will a gallon of cream make?"

"About five pounds, the man told me."

"Indeed! Cream is eighty cents a gallon. That will bring the butter down to sixteen cents."

"And we'll have the butter-milk into the bargain. Capital, isn't it! I wonder people have never thought of this before. It doesn't take a great while for butter to come, even in the ordinary churn."

Full of this new idea, on the next morning their milk-man was overpersuaded to disappoint the remainder of his customers to let them have a gallon of cream for their new experiment. An effort had been made to keep the juveniles in as plain as daylight. It must do. To-morrow morning we will get a gallon of cream from our milk-man, and have butter of our own churning for breakfast. Think what a saving it will be!

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